

ALASKA PEOPLE

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North to Alaska

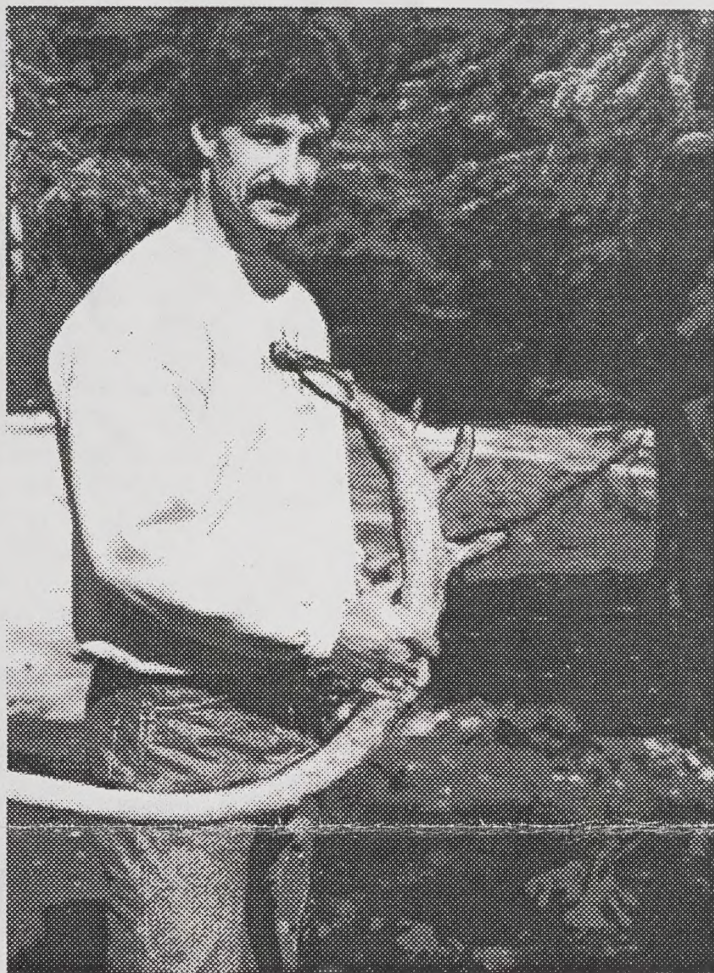
Mike Sondergaard began his college career with the desire to become a forester. There were some detours, but his early goal has brought him to the Glennallen District, where he will serve as a natural resource specialist.

"Out of high school, I started out wanting to be a forester," recalls Sondergaard. "But I quickly learned, after working a season in the BLM's Coos Bay District, that government agencies weren't hiring." He continued taking college classes, and eventually learned of a seasonal forestry job at BLM's Battle Mountain District. That led to the cooperative education program and a degree in resource management with an emphasis in forestry from the University of Nevada - Reno.

Sondergaard worked his way up to district forester at Battle Mountain, where he also had the lead for the district soil, water, and air program, as well as GPS coordination. "I was recently made GIS coordinator and was just getting into the training when the chance to come to Alaska came up," notes Sondergaard. "The mystique of Alaska is in the minds of most people in the US, I think. I visited here a few times, and living here is almost like a dream come true. My kids will have the outdoor experiences I wish I had when I was a kid."

Sondergaard and his wife, Eileen, have two sons, Anthony, age 6, and Dillon, age 4, and are expecting another child this summer. All are settling into life in rural Alaska, acclimating to the long days, considering a garden, and beginning to collect the gear necessary to take advantage of the outdoor opportunities available. "I already got us a snowboard and a 4-wheeler, and there will be more toys to come," he laughs.

Forestry, soil, water and air, hazardous materials, planning and NEPA coordination, and safety programs will all come under Sondergaard's responsibility at the



KJ Mushovic

Sondergaard examines a caribou antler while looking forward to bagging one for himself.

Glennallen District. He's already been involved in monitoring repairs on a Trans-Alaska Pipeline valve leak, and will play a prominent role in a major timber salvage sale offering to be put out for bid this summer. It's a full plate, but Sondergaard looks forward to the challenge.

—KJ Mushovic

Looking ahead to CFC

BLM hasn't looked so good in Combined Federal Campaign stats over the past few years, so 1996 coordinator Kathy Flippen is out to change that. "I see BLM involved in many things in the community, so I know we're an agency that cares. I want to see that kind of commitment in our CFC campaign this year." So start thinking about which service agency most deserves your support in the 1996 Combined Federal Campaign.

RAPS needs YOU

The RAPS program is looking for volunteers to host students this summer in both the Anchorage and Fairbanks areas. Most students will start in late June and will be with the program for 8 weeks. If you're interested or would like more info, contact Jon Deininger at 267-1494 or Carrie Agibinik at 267-1491.

The psychology of safety

A psychologist told Alaska Fire Service workers to question their judgment when making decisions in stressful situations.

Curt C. Braun, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Idaho in Moscow, gave a six-hour presentation to more than 100 AFS workers April 10. A former hotshot crewmember, Braun reviewed the South Canyon investigations and applied findings to human decisionmaking in the fire environment.

Braun told the fire workers that decisionmaking can be less than perfect in stressful situations. He said fatigue was often a factor in stressful situations, so establishing procedures for every operation, and practicing them until they become automatic is the best way to ensure safety. "Focus on behavior and attitudes will follow," he said.

Rediscover Your Public Lands



TEAM BLM—ASD Sally Wisely recently suggested it might be fun to form a BLM team to do some of the local fun runs benefiting Alaskan charities. Cheryl Fusco, Chris Sitbon and Bunny Sterin agreed, and soon enlisted Scott Guyer to design a t-shirt for the team. BLMers bought 160 shirts featuring Scott's humorous design captioned, "Team BLM: Fifty and Fit." Scott swears he's referencing BLM's 50th anniversary and not the age of the average participant!

"I thought this would be a good way to stay fit and have a little fun while contributing to the community," says Sally. She credits Cheryl, Bunny, Chris and Scott with making the idea a success.

Employees donned their bright blue team tees April 27 to join the Alaska Heart Run. They plan to walk or run many other fitness events throughout the summer, including the Alaska Run for Women, benefiting breast cancer treatment and research, and the Mayor's Midnight Sun Fun Run, which raises funds to maintain local parks and recreational facilities.

READING FOR RESEARCH—

BLMers raised nearly \$600 in April at a book fair held in the ASO Public Room. Coordinated with Reading's Fun, Ltd., the event gave employees a chance to get a good deal on popular bestsellers with a portion of the proceeds going to the Loree Schimmack Cancer Resource Library. Located in space provided by Alaska Regional Hospital, the library provides a one-stop repository of information about cancer treatments and options.

John Rumps helped coordinate the event. "This was such a success we've scheduled another book fair for November," he explains. "We selected the Schimmack Library to receive the proceeds at the suggestion of Sharon Prien, who recently lost her father to cancer and has been volunteering to get the library started. We may form some sort of selection committee for next time."

Loree Schimmack was the daughter of retired BLMer Jim Murray, former manager of the Fairbanks Support Center.

CONGRATS—to BLM team developer/trainer Sandy Dunn, winner of the 1996 Public Administrator of the Year Award. Sandy will be honored at an awards banquet hosted by The American Society for Public Administration, May 14, at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel.

Congrats also to 1996 Federal Employee of the Year nominees Pat Moore, Bob King, Tom Deiling, Donna Redding-Gubitosa, and the ADO Lands Team. BLM was well represented by this group of dedicated professionals.

CABIN FEVER HITS FAIRBANKS!

—Over 6,000 people from the Fairbanks area poured out of their homes, squinted at the sunshine, and drove to the Carlson Center the weekend of April 19. What was the draw? A living catalog of dreams where they could make plans for a fantastic Alaska summer.

After a long winter, Outdoor Recreation '96 signaled summer fun. As the recreation industry tantalized people with their wares, federal and state agencies enticed the public to try the best recreational opportunities available on public lands.

Over three days, 21 employees worked the BLM booth, which featured a photo display, 50 Years of Public Service. They answered questions, handed out brochures and helped young (and some not-so-young) people match swatches of fur to animal photos. As an annual harbinger of spring, this event has become a popular community outreach effort for BLM.

URSUS ALERTUS—The bears are making an early appearance on the Campbell Tract, so employees and recreationists should use caution. In early May wildlife biologist Bruce Seppi identified adult brown bear tracks and fresh scat.

JUST SAY NO—Did you know employees can't accept a gift from a business or organization BLM does business with? An ADO employee recently entered an American Express drawing (open to the public). She won two round-trip tickets to Mexico, but was unable to accept the prize. The tickets are considered a gift from an outside source and a violation of the Code of Ethics.

ALL-AMERICAN FUN—The second BLM All-American Day was a hit April 24-25. ALT members served as celebrities at a game dubbed "BLM Squares" (no, we're not referring to the celebrities, but to the game's similarity to Hollywood Squares!). They answered questions about the history of BLM, our nation and its peoples, and employees could then agree or disagree with their answers.

Eight teams of 3-5 employees competed for prizes. The winning team, who modestly called themselves "Second to None," included John Miller, Max Graves and Bobby Hollis. The runner-up was "New Kids on the Block," a BOM team comprised of Don Baggs, Earl Williams and Mark Meyer.

All-American Day was coordinated by a small team led by Lynette Nakazawa of Mapping Sciences. In addition to the game, the event featured a potluck and cultural displays by employees. "Our first All-American celebration last year was good, but I think this one was even better," says Lynette. "Everyone seemed to have a good time, and I think probably learned something in the process."

One of the things employees learned was that many of the ALT have a healthy sense of humor. Many ALT "celebrities" fabricated humorous answers as in the original Hollywood Squares game, forcing contestants to don their thinking caps. While many employees disagreed with the bogus answers, everyone agreed the second All-American Day was fun, educational, and decidedly a hit.



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Your employee newsletter has a new look. Yes, it's shorter, but it's also less formal and more timely, since we've returned to monthly publication. We'd appreciate your comments or suggestions. What do YOU think?

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